

CYLINDROCLADIUM BLIGHT OF SILVER BUTTONWOOD

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Silver buttonwood, *Conocarpus erectus* var. *sericeus* L., is a native of the Florida Keys and, because of cold sensitivity, is restricted to south Florida. The beauty of the velvety silver-gray leaves makes it a popular plant in landscape designs. It is used extensively as an accent tree, for highway median strip planting, and is pruned as a shrub or hedge for home landscaping (2).

Silver buttonwood may be severely blighted by the fungus *Cylindrocladium scoparium* Morgan. Bureau of Plant Pathology plant disease records (unpublished) indicate that although it is most commonly associated with a cutting blight, the fungus may also infect established plants. The fungus is also a pathogen of other popular Florida ornamental plants such as azalea (3), juniper (5), and magnolia (1).

SYMPTOMS. In the cutting blight phase of this disease, the stems turn brown to black, with infection progressing to the stem tins and into the leaves, causing leaf browning and abscission (fig. 1A).

When the foliage of mature plants is infected, leaves turn brown with a high percentage of abscission. Brown longitudinal streaks develop on the branches, and tip dieback occurs (fig. 1B).



Fig. 1. *Cylindrocladium* blight of silver buttonwood: A) cuttings showing browning of leaves; B) mature plant showing defoliation and stem tip dieback.

CONTROL. No effective chemical control of the cutting blight of silver buttonwood was found in greenhouse investigations (4). Thus, the key to control of this phase of the disease is sanitation, i.e., the use of clean cuttings and sterile media in disinfested propagation benches. Benlate and Daconil, however, gave good disease control when used as protective sprays on mature plants.

Literature Cited

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